

The Peace Bridge

The Time for Action is Now

Efficient transportation between Buffalo and Fort Erie is absolutely vital to the preservation of the Western New York economy and presents unique opportunities for economic growth. Buffalo's early rise to prominence as a hub of commerce occurred because Buffalonians took advantage of our unique geographic advantages. The remarkable economic growth of the Toronto area presents another opportunity for Buffalo to use its unique geography to fuel its own economy.

With the current bridge and plaza configuration, it is estimated that the total average travel time on the bridge and its plazas for trucks entering the U.S. is 59 minutes, while the total travel time with the additional bridge lanes and reconfigured "traditional" with more efficient traffic flow plaza would be 14 minutes.^[1] The significance of this difference cannot be understated, given that approximately 340,000 metric tons of cargo cross the Peace Bridge every week^[2]. It is estimated that the economic impact of the transportation travel time savings will be \$1.14 billion annually.^[3]

The Tremendous Growth of Metro Toronto

Canada's "Golden Horseshoe", defined as the Toronto area and the Eastern Niagara Peninsula, has a population of 8.1 million residents as of the 2006 census, and is projected to grow to over 11.5 million people by the 2030s.^[4] Toronto is the seventh largest metropolitan area in North America and is the continent's second fastest growing metro area.^[5]

The Buffalo-Niagara region already takes advantage of Toronto's tremendous economic engine. For example:

- 40% of the students who attend D'Youville College are Canadians.
- Western New York hospital visits by Canadians have a local economic impact of \$42 million.
- Approximately 15,000 visitors to a typical Buffalo Bills home game are Canadians.
- 12% of Buffalo Sabres season ticket holders are Canadians.
- Approximately 1/3 of patrons at the Buffalo Niagara International Airport are Canadians.^[6]

The Peace Bridge and Manufacturing

The Buffalo Ford Stamping Plant in Hamburg, NY presents another clear example of how the Western New York economy is dependent on smooth transportation links to Canada. The stamping plant feeds automotive components to the assembly plant in Canada on nearly a just-on-time basis. When the plant in Hamburg competes with other Ford facilities for new lines of work, the unpredictability of border crossing waits is a potential negative factor. Conversely, smoother, more predictable border passage enhances the competitiveness of the Hamburg facility.

The Peace Bridge and Tourism

Western New York benefits greatly from visits by Canadian Tourists. For example, approximately 35% of the skiers at Holiday Valley Resort are Canadians^[7], and a substantial percentage of visitors to the Chautauqua Institution are from Canada.

Tourism is a highly valued economic activity because instead of merely redistributing local wealth it leads to a net importation of wealth into an economy from elsewhere. The Canadian Dollar is reaching historic highs in terms of its value compared to the U.S. dollar. This increases the buying power of Canadian travelers to the U.S., thus making a trip to the U.S. a more desirable travel option for Canadians.

This helps to explain why, in 2006, across all points of entry into the U.S, there was 7.6% increase in Canadian visits to the U.S.^[8], and U.S. visits to Canada nationally remained almost constant in the same period.^[9] Interestingly, despite the fact that the Peace Bridge is the second busiest border crossing between the two nations, the volume of traffic on the Peace Bridge actually fell slightly (less than 1%) in that same period.^[10] This suggests that because of congestion and unpredictable waits at the Peace Bridge, Buffalo is not realizing as much economic gain from visiting Canadians as a result of the relatively strong Canadian dollar as other areas of the U.S. which are visited by Canadians.

Improvements in Environmental Quality for the West Side

The negative impact of vehicle emissions from the Peace Bridge's U.S. plaza on the West Side of Buffalo is well documented. While the proposed "traditional" plaza will produce emissions, the amount of emissions produced will be a substantial reduction from current emission levels as a result of the current inefficient, congested plaza configuration. As such, keeping the present configuration is a poor public policy decision from an air-quality point of view when the negative impact of idling on air quality is considered.

Idling (as opposed to actual driving) is the major source of airborne pollution generated by vehicles on the U.S. plaza. A study published in 2002 based on 1999 data found that at that time idling vehicles accounted for 41% of the Bridge's Carbon Monoxide (CO) pollution, 51% of its Nitrogen Oxide (NO_x) pollution and 58% of its emissions of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC).^[11] That was based, however, on 1999 average idling times of 2.5 minutes for cars and busses and 10 minutes for trucks. The average time it takes a truck to enter the U.S. via the Peace Bridge has increased by approximately one hour since that time.^[12] With the increase in idling times, so too has there been an increase in the percentage of pollution emanating from the plaza as a result of idling.

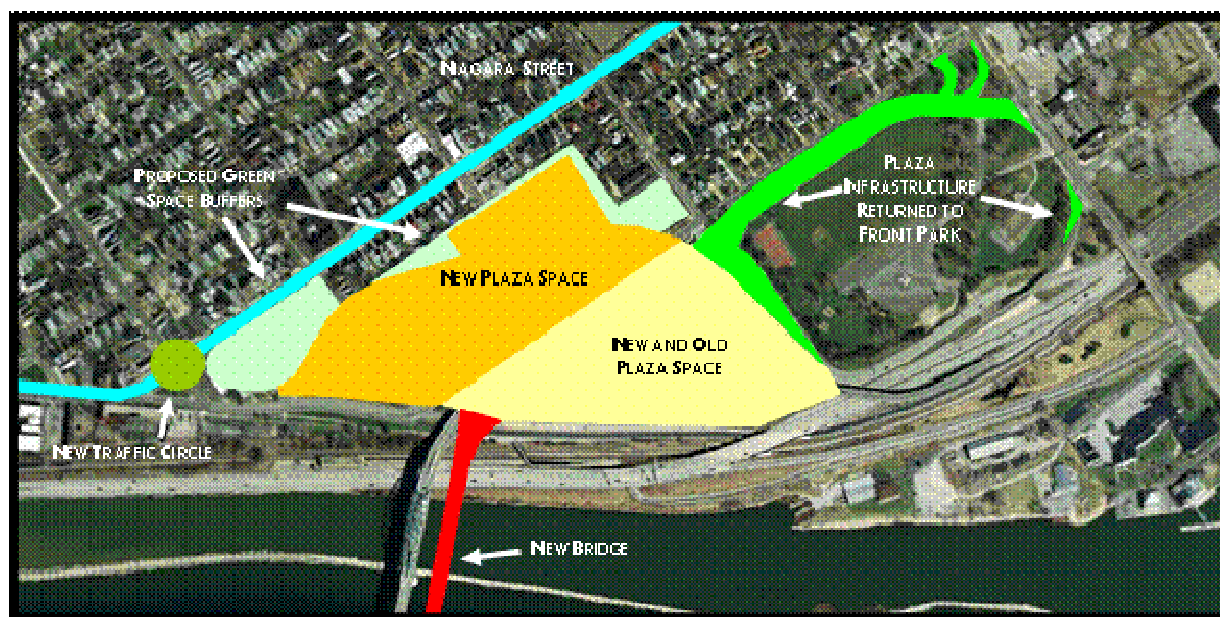
The traffic modeling for the new bridge shows that under the proposed "traditional" plaza configuration, average truck time spent on the bridge and in the plazas would total about 14 minutes, while if nothing changes the average truck time spent on the bridge and plazas would be about 59 minutes.^[13] As idling is the major source of air pollution from the plaza, the current configuration which causes substantially more idling has a much more negative impact on West Side air quality than the proposed "traditional" plaza. As such, allowing the current configuration to remain in place is a poor public policy decision from an air-quality point of view when the negative impact of idling on air quality is considered.

Restoring Olmsted's Front Park

Front Park was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and boasts a dramatic view of Lake Erie and the Niagara River. Over the years, the park has been encroached on by the demands of transportation infrastructure, including infrastructure related to the existing U.S. Peace Bridge Plaza. Under the proposed Traditional Plaza plan, three acres of parkland would be restored to Front Park. Additionally, 5.2 acres of new buffer/green space would be created to help mitigate the impact of the plaza on the surrounding neighborhood and 2.7 acres of additional parkland.

Revitalizing Niagara Street

The construction of a new bridge and a reconfigured plaza will bring an opportunity to breathe new life into the Niagara Street corridor. This section of the City could be a bustling hub of activity for customs brokers, freight forwarders and other border-related businesses. This would create good-paying jobs in an economically depressed portion of the City.



Increased Construction Job Creation with U.S. Plaza

Shared border management would have mitigated a number of impacts of the plaza on its immediate environment, however, the proposal did have some drawbacks. The facilities which will be used by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) staff will be built by the PBA and financed with PBA bonds. Those bonds would be paid by rent revenue paid by the federal General Services Administration on behalf of the CBP. If the CBP infrastructure were built on the Canadian side of the border, it would be built by Canadian construction contractors and Canadian construction workers, but ultimately financed by U.S. taxpayers. The abandonment of Shared Border Management and the policy shift toward a traditional plaza means that approximately \$60 million of largely U.S.-taxpayer-financed construction contracts which would have gone to Canadian contractors and workers will go to U.S. contractors and workers.

^[1] April 2007 PBA Pre-Draft EIS.

^[2] <http://www.ebtc.info/PDF/Executive%20summary.pdf>

^[3] April 2007 PBA Pre-Draft EIS.

^[4] <http://www.queensu.ca/surp/Executive%20Summary%20-%20Sanfilippo.pdf#search='golden%20horseshoe%20population%20million'>, link active as of 7/2/07.

^[5] <http://www.demographia.com/rac-toronto.pdf>, link active as of 7/2/07

^[6] http://regional-institute.buffalo.edu/Includes/UserDownloads/PolicyBrief_RegionsEdge_6_07.pdf, link active as of 7/2/07

^[7] http://regional-institute.buffalo.edu/Includes/UserDownloads/PolicyBrief_RegionsEdge_6_07.pdf, link active as of 7/2/07

^[8] <http://www.tinet.ita.doc.gov/view/m-2006-I-001/table1.html>

^[9] <http://www.tinet.ita.doc.gov/view/m-2006-I-001/table1.html>, link active as of 7/2/07.

^[10] <http://www.tinet.ita.doc.gov/view/m-2006-O-001/index.html>, link active as of 7/2/07.

^[11] <http://www.peacebridge.com/traffic.php>, link active as of 7/2/04

^[12] <http://www.peacebridgex.com/files/airquality/regional%20emissions%20memo.pdf>, link active as of 7/2/07

^[13] <http://www.tc.gc.ca/pol/en/report/BorderStudy/C3.htm>, link active as of 7/2/04.

^[14] April 2007 PBA Pre-Draft EIS.